



Challenge Activities Program Areas



Challenge to the States

The 1992 reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 added Part E, State Challenge Activities, to the programs funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The purpose of Part E is to provide incentives for States participating in the Formula Grants Program to develop, adopt, and improve policies and programs in 1 or more of 10 specified Challenge areas.

Challenge Activity E

Developing and adopting policies to prohibit gender bias in placement and treatment and establishing programs to ensure that female youth have access to the full range of health and mental health services, treatment for physical or sexual assault and abuse, self-defense instruction, education in parenting in general and other training and vocational services.

Female Delinquents in the Juvenile Justice System

Until recently, the research necessary to create a national profile of female delinquency from which to develop effective gender-specific programming or to eliminate gender bias in the juvenile justice system has been lacking. However, there has been an increased interest in both the adult and juvenile female offender during the last decade. This new interest has generated some of the research necessary to create a more accurate national profile of the female offender and to provide effective programs for this population. Although female delinquency has not traditionally been a Federal priority, a new Federal emphasis on the needs of female offenders based on the experience of the female rather than the male delinquent has generated fresh and innovative studies of delinquency and its causes.

Female delinquency has traditionally been easy to overlook—girls' offenses have tended to be more self-destructive, "victimless," and less violent than those committed by males.

Increasing numbers of female offenders, both juvenile and adult, are being charged with violent offenses. Moreover, girls charged with repeat status offenses are more likely to be detained or confined by judges. For example, female delinquents in Virginia are committing more Part One offenses (as defined in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Uniform Crime Reports*) and other serious and violent offenses.

According to *Girls: Delinquency and Juvenile Justice* by Meda Chesney-Lind and Randall Shelden, "Girls in trouble, particularly those in the juvenile justice system, share many problems with their male counterparts. They are likely to be poor, to have come from disrupted and violent families, and to be having difficulties in school." National data suggest that despite their similar backgrounds, girls respond to these disadvantages differently than boys do. For example, the data continue to confirm that while females are committing a wider variety of offenses than in previous years, they are still less likely than males to become involved in serious, violent delinquency. In fact, the male-to-female ratio for violent index crimes (homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault) is 9:1, and the ratio for the most serious index property crimes (burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson) is about 11:1.¹

In contrast, female offenders are more likely to be arrested for status offenses (underage drinking, running away, incorrigibility, truancy) and for prostitution. Thus, for status offenses as well as for prostitution, theft, and forgery, the male-



to-female ratios are much closer. In fact, over half of the juveniles arrested for running away are girls, and their arrests for running away and curfew violations alone account for nearly one-quarter of all female arrests.²

The juvenile justice system has historically institutionalized or incarcerated in detention centers and training schools large numbers of female offenders who commit delinquent acts or status offenses. This is done because the system often lacks other appropriate nonsecure placements. Sadly, statistics reflect that over 70 percent of female delinquents placed in correctional settings are past victims of physical and/or sexual abuse, and nearly four out of five have run away from home prior to the incarceration.³ According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) *Violence Against Women: A National Crime Victimization Survey Report* published in 1994, an estimated 572,032 girls and women experience violence at the hands of “an intimate.” This is over 10 times as many incidents of violence as men experience.⁴ It is not surprising then that many female delinquents first encounter the juvenile justice system because they have run away, often to escape situations involving physical and sexual abuse occurring in the home. Nor is it surprising that these same girls run away from the correctional settings and programs into which they are placed. Many programs are not equipped to address the underlying problems of violence and abuse.

Although commitments to locked facilities have declined in recent years, female delinquents are still more likely than males to be held in detention centers. Furthermore, females who commit the same type of serious offenses as male delinquents are spending a greater amount of time in detention.⁵ In small States such as Delaware, girls in need of secure, long-term placements have traditionally been transferred out of State due to a lack of appropriate secure beds. Perhaps more light will be shed on these critical issues when the General Accounting Office (GAO) issues its national study of gender bias in the juvenile justice system later this year. The juvenile justice system lacks alternative placement options, both secure and nonsecure.

Understanding Gender-Specific Services

At the local, State, and Federal levels, individuals have begun to recognize that effective gender-specific programming is specific to the female experience and is free from gender bias. One example of criteria for such services can be found in the *Proposed Program Redesign for the Cheltenham Young Women’s Facility*, which is Maryland’s only public secure care facility for girls. Cheltenham staff working with representatives from field services, probation, and the court redesigned their entire service delivery system at the facility. They identified the following essential components of gender-specific programming:

- Meet the unique needs of females.
- Value the female perspective.

- Honor the female experience.
- Celebrate the contributions of girls and women.
- Respect female development.
- Empower girls and young women to reach their full human potential.
- Work to change established attitudes that prevent or discourage girls and young women from recognizing that potential.⁶

Gender-specific programming must provide services designed to intervene comprehensively in a young girl’s life. In their report *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, the American Association of University Women and the National Education Association provide criteria for fair gender curricula. They found that gender-specific programs and service delivery systems must:

- Acknowledge and affirm similarities and differences among and within groups of people.
- Be inclusive, allowing females and males to find and identify positively with the messages and expectations of themselves.
- Be accurately designed around statistical data and developmental research that is verifiable and able to withstand critical analysis.
- Be affirmative, acknowledging and valuing the worth of individuals, no matter what their backgrounds or offense histories.
- Be representative in staff and approach, balancing multiple perspectives including those of race, gender, and ethnic background, and emphasizing staff training at all levels.
- Be integrated, weaving together the experiences, needs, and interests of both males and females in ways that serve each most effectively and appropriately.⁷

Promising Programs and Approaches

Many States have begun to recognize the need to develop secure residential programs that incorporate gender-specific treatment practices. One approach used successfully in Minnesota and Oregon is to lobby State legislatures to pass legislation guaranteeing gender equity in resource allocation. Some States, such as Florida, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, have developed statewide commissions or committees to address a variety of issues related to the treatment of girls and young women. Although they have had varying degrees of success, these approaches were developed by committed advocates who fought to place at-risk girls at the forefront of their State’s juvenile justice agenda. The following is a sampling of programs across the country that are using the above concepts to develop appropriate prevention, intervention, and treatment services for juvenile female offenders.

P.A.C.E. Center for Girls, Florida. In 1982, with \$100 in a checking account and a dedicated board of volunteers, Vicki Burke founded the P.A.C.E. (Practical and Cultural Education) Center for Girls as an alternative to detention in the Jacksonville, Florida, juvenile justice system. The program, which offers day treatment services to both status offenders and delinquents, now serves approximately 290 girls annually at seven sites in Florida. P.A.C.E. plans to open two more chapters during 1995. While a State office provides quality assurance and program consistency, each local program has its own board of directors, and management decisions are made by local staffs.

“There is a model for this program, and we at the State office are very strict in ensuring that individual programs continue the vision Vicki started so that P.A.C.E. remains youth-centered and gender-sensitive,” said LaWanda Ravoir, State Director. “The board of directors is made aware of the State standards, but within them there is certain flexibility to govern their programs and to meet the unique needs of their populations.”⁸

All P.A.C.E. programs offer a core academic curriculum and are State-accredited dropout prevention schools, allowing girls to earn credits toward their high school diplomas or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Academic classes are small and emphasize experiential learning and teacher interaction. Life skills, vocational opportunities, and health curricula are also offered. In addition, girls regularly participate in community service projects. Families of the girls are also assigned a P.A.C.E. social worker, who makes monthly home visits and appropriate service referrals.⁹

Even though the program is voluntary, most girls are referred by the justice system or local schools. P.A.C.E. accepts girls aged 12 to 18 and keeps them an average of 6 to 8 months. Girls who successfully complete their individual treatment plans and leave the program will often have maintained a 92 percent attendance rate, completed two gender-specific classes such as self-defense or sex education, and earned enough academic credits to advance one or more grade levels. Upon leaving the program, the girl must also have a job or return to a regular or alternative school setting. P.A.C.E. also runs a followup program to track and support all girls for 3 years after they leave the principal program.¹⁰

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City Girls Program, Chicago, Illinois. In 1991, the City of Chicago Department of Health awarded the Interventions Program a contract to create the City Girls Program, which provides specialized residential substance abuse treatment to

adolescent females. The program fills an identified gap in the existing continuum of care available in Illinois for this high-risk population. Interventions' City Girls Program is regarded as a model among programs serving chemically dependent teenage girls who have extensive legal involvement with the juvenile justice system.

City Girls recognizes that chemical dependency is rarely the only problem facing adolescent girls involved in the juvenile justice system. The typical teenage girl receiving services at City Girls has already dropped out of school or is performing marginally in academics. She has a history of family sexual abuse and lacks parental supervision. She often comes from a low income family, is malnourished, and lacks nutritional guidance. Her housing arrangements are unstable, and she is at risk of homelessness if she has been expelled from her family due to her substance abuse, pregnancy, or other unresolved conflicts. These girls have often been the victims of physical, emotional, or mental abuse, and are struggling with depression, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, and general feelings of worthlessness.¹¹

Through girl-only self-help support groups, the City Girls program has successfully developed a “culture of recovery” that empowers many young women to realize they have choices in their lives. Although primarily a substance abuse program, City Girls serves girls aged 12 to 18 and offers vocational and educational testing and training, including preparation and testing for the GED exam. Health education is offered, covering such issues as sex education, AIDS awareness, nutrition, and exercise instruction. Families are also encouraged to attend weekly group meetings and individual family sessions, and the girls are given the opportunity to practice drug-free coping skills by participating in a comprehensive therapeutic recreation program.¹²

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Department of Juvenile Services Female Population Task Force, Baltimore, Maryland. In 1992, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) developed a Female Population Task Force designed to focus attention on the needs of young female offenders. Initially, the Task Force mission was to profile this population, identify its needs, and design a plan to meet those needs. As part of this effort, the Task Force has published two annual reports describing the status of the adolescent female offender in Maryland and the services and programs available to her.

Initial research revealed a picture of Maryland's young female offenders as girls between the ages of 15 and 17. Most of these

offenders came from single-parent homes, resided in Baltimore City, and had committed assault or property offenses. These young women had often been abused, had health concerns, and were often teen mothers. Statistics from the Maryland justice system also indicated that girls' cases in the State were more often closed at intake than boys', but once they were adjudicated, girls were more often removed from their homes. This was especially true for African-American girls.¹³

One of the most innovative ways the Task Force and DJS chose to address the needs of this population was to create the Female Intervention Team (FIT) probation unit in 1992. This specialized unit in Baltimore City serves approximately 400 girls annually and is made up of probation officers who volunteer to serve only girls on their caseloads. Now all girls placed on probation in Baltimore receive services in the FIT unit. Officers have received specialized training to handle issues critical to girls, such as sexual abuse, teen parenting, drug and alcohol abuse, and low self-esteem.

In a related effort, the Task Force also sanctioned a redesign of the Cheltenham Young Women's Facility. DJS has recently asked for technical assistance from Community Research Associates to implement this program model in the newly built, State-designed girls' correctional facility.

Finally, DJS trained all case managers to identify the issues facing teen mothers and pregnant teens, and find resources for them. A parenting skills curriculum for incarcerated teens has been fully implemented at one of the facilities. DJS staff also worked with external consultants to design a sexual abuse training curriculum, offered to all DJS line staff in 1994.¹⁴

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Oregon Girls and Young Women's Project. In an effort to educate the public about the specific needs of at-risk girls and young women, the Oregon Commission on Youth and Families contracted the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to develop and disseminate a collection of interrelated communications and media products. Since the original contract, these products have included a handbook and informational brochure on how individuals can help girls and young women at risk in their own communities. These materials include information on effective advocacy and public education strategies; a speaker's action kit containing a model speech, fact sheets, and overheads for use in presentations; and two public service announcements. NWREL has also produced several issues of a newsletter that provides information on effec-

tive programs and services in Oregon, as well as current issues affecting girls.¹⁵

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National Girls' Caucus. In March 1993, the National Girls' Caucus (NGC) held its first meeting in Washington, D.C. For the first time in years, child advocates; policymakers; public officials; community, religious, and minority leaders; parents; girls; direct service providers; and funders from across the country met to address issues of gender equality for young women within the juvenile justice system. NGC is currently composed of 105 members from 25 States, with more than 200 additional supporters representing all 50 States. NGC held two additional planning meetings and developed an organizational structure that includes a steering committee. In October 1994, in Orlando, Florida, NGC held its first National Girls' Roundtable designed to address issues of public policy development, programming, and service delivery for adolescent female offenders and those at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. While receiving support from foundations and organizations, the NGC is a member-driven body that allows individuals working with or interested in at-risk girls and young women to have a voice.

The goals of the National Girls' Caucus are:

- To impact public policy, resource allocation, and research to improve the quality of care and services for girls.
- To ensure fairness in the juvenile justice system by eliminating gender, ethnic, and racial bias.
- To ensure culturally sensitive, gender-specific programming for girls and young women so that they have the opportunity to live healthy, productive, and safe lives.
- To raise public awareness regarding the need for gender-appropriate programming and services for girls.¹⁶

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Background Information

States must sensitize their juvenile justice personnel. In order to appropriately serve the needs of adolescent female offenders, a number of national agencies offer training in this area. For example, the American Correctional Association sponsored a conference, "Juvenile Female Offenders: A Time for Change," in November 1994 in Chicago, Illinois. The conference proceedings are available from the American Correctional Association.

The State Relations and Assistance Division (SRAD) of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) sponsored a training and technical assistance workshop for representatives from 16 States committed to addressing the issue of gender-specific services. The proceedings of this workshop are available from Community Research Associates. With support from OJJDP, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) offers a week-long training session for individuals working with girls in juvenile justice settings. The curriculum covers issues such as developmental differences between girls and boys, socialization messages internalized by at-risk girls, and programming methods for this population. For additional information on any of these training and technical assistance opportunities, please refer to the resource list to contact specific organizations.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the programs mentioned here will serve as models for other States to begin to address the gaps in their delivery systems and to intervene comprehensively in the lives of female delinquents. With a national portrait of the female delinquent only beginning to emerge, it will take time to develop programs and services that address the special needs of female delinquents in an integrated, inclusive way.

Additional Resources

American Correctional Association, 8025 Laurel Lakes Court, Laurel, MD 20707-5075; 301-206-5100; Fax 301-206-5061.

Community Research Associates, 11990 Grant Street, Suite 318, Northglenn, CO 80233; 303-451-1902; Fax 303-451-1049.

Girls, Incorporated, National Resource Center, 441 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202; 317-634-7546; Fax 317-634-3024.

Girl Scouts of the USA, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2702; 212-852-5726; Fax 212-852-6515.

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000; 800-638-8736; Fax 301-251-5212.

National Institute of Corrections, 1960 Industrial Circle, Suite A, Longmont, CO 80501; 800-995-6429; Fax 303-682-0469.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 633 Indiana Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20534; 202-307-5924; Fax 202-514-6382.

Endnotes

¹ Chesney-Lind, Meda, and Randall G. Shelden. 1992. *Girls: Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, pp. 8, 27.

² Ibid., pp. 8, 29.

³ National Girls' Caucus. 1994. *National Girls' Caucus Newsletter*. Jacksonville, FL, p. 2.

⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1994. *Violence Against Women: A National Crime Victimization Survey Report*. Washington, D.C., p. 6.

⁵ Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. 1994. *Mental Health Issues of Juveniles in Detention*. Richmond, VA.

⁶ Cheltenham Young Women's Facility Program Redesign Committee. 1993. *Proposed Program Redesign for the Cheltenham Young Women's Facility*. Baltimore, MD, p. 11.

⁷ American Association of University Women and the National Education Association. 1992. *How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study of the Major Findings on Girls and Education*. Baltimore: American Association of University Women, p. 64.

⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

⁹ Community Research Associates (CRA). 1993. "P.A.C.E. Center for Girls." *Profile* 5(5), p. 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ *National Girls' Caucus Newsletter*, p. 5.

¹² Interventions. 1995. *Interventions' City of Chicago Female Adolescent Treatment Program (City Girls Program) Fact Sheet*. Chicago, IL.

¹³ *National Girls' Caucus Newsletter*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Oregon Commission on Children and Families. 1994. *Girls and Young Women's Project Fact Sheet*. Portland, OR, p. 1.

¹⁶ *National Girls' Caucus Newsletter*, p. 1.

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